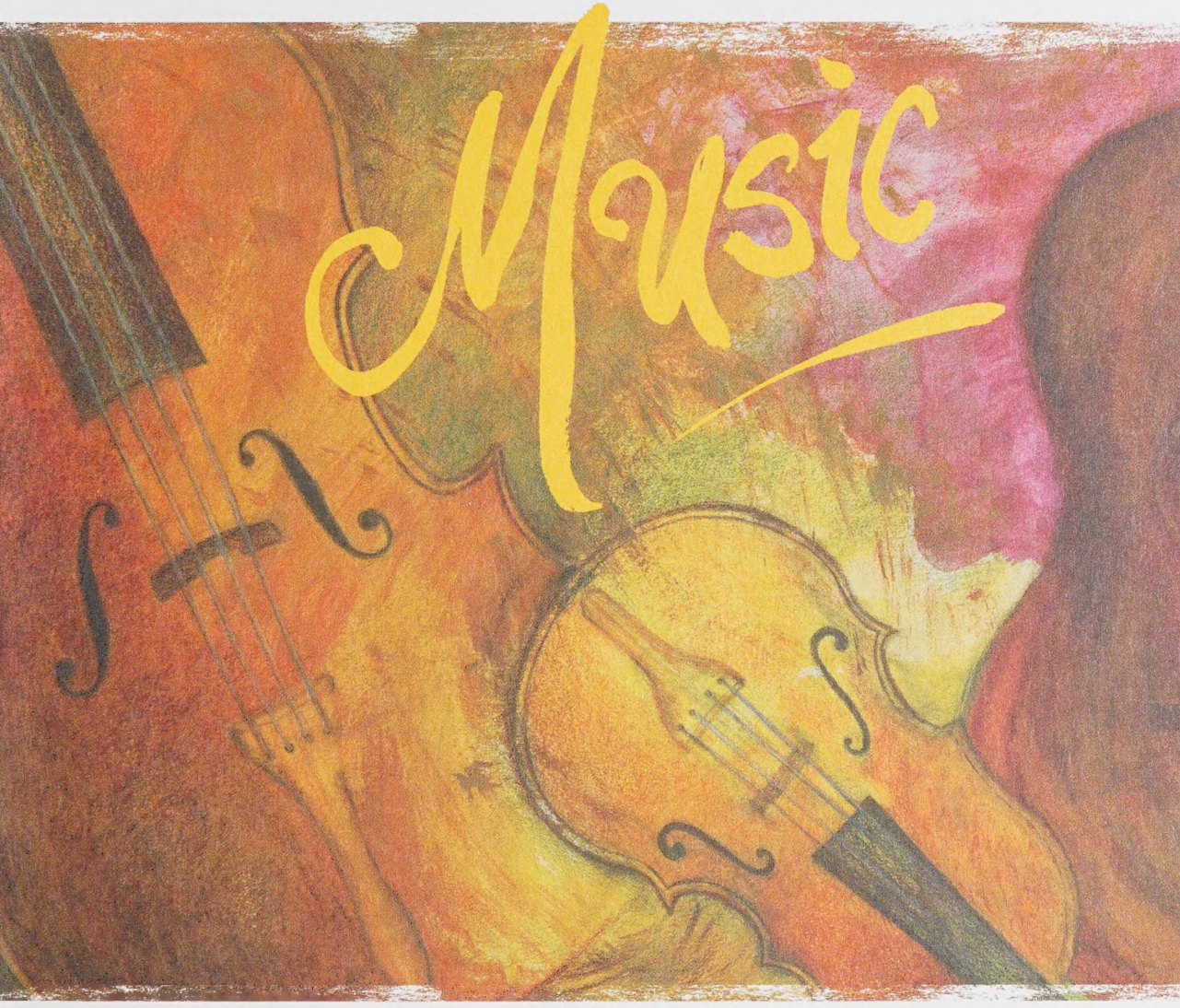
The University of Alberta Department of Music presents:

PANOCHA STRING QUARTET



Jiri Panocha, violin **Pavel Zejfart, violin**
Miroslav Sehnoutka, viola **Jaroslav Kulhan, cello**

Sunday, November 9, 2008 – 8:00 pm
Convocation Hall, Arts Building, University of Alberta

DEPARTMENT OF
MUSIC
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THIS EXTRAORDINARY CONCERT IS OFFERED
TO COMMEMORATE THE 90TH ANNIVERSARY
OF FOUNDING OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA
ON 28.OCTOBER 1918,

AND

TO CELEBRATE THE 40TH YEAR OF EXISTENCE
OF THE PANOCHA QUARTET
WITH ORIGINAL MEMBERS

Co-sponsored by Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences of Alberta SVU
and the Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies

Program

Quartet in D Minor — Jakub Jan Ryba (1765-1815)
- Adagio
- Menuetto-Kanon. Poco allegretto
- Scherzo. Allegro

Quartet № 2 in G Major, Op 8 (1878) — Zdeněk Fibich (1850-1900)
- Allegro moderato
- Adagio
- Scherzo. Allegro scherzando
- Allegro

Intermission

Quartet № 13, Op106 (1895) — Antonin Dvořák
- Allegro moderato
- Adagio ma non troppo
- Molto vivace
- Andante sostenuto-Allegro con fuoco

Program Notes

Jakub Jan Ryba (1765-1815) is one of the best known names in his home country, thanks to his one most enduring composition – The Czech Christmas Mass. This "nativity in tones" has the same meaning (and the same exposure) for the Czechs as Handel's Messiah has for the British Commonwealth music lovers. However, Ryba, one of the best educated village schoolmasters of his time, has written more than one thousand sacred and secular compositions. These include 49 masses, 72 string quartets, innumerable other pieces of chamber music (sonatas, duos, trios, quintets etc) as well as many compositions for orchestra including symphonies, concertos and many songs on Czech texts. While any schoolmaster of that time had to be first and foremost a good musician and composer, commonly performing at palaces, churches and other venues of people's gathering, Ryba was an extraordinary case. Under the guidance of his father (who was also a village schoolmaster), the young Jakub Jan has learned singing, violin, cello and organ, as well as continuo and composition. He was able to substitute for his father at the local church organ from the age of 10. He spent 5 years attending a gymnasium (senior high school) in Prague, learned several languages (German, Latin, French) and became interested in philosophical books and literature on the theory of music. He contributed substantially to the development of the foundation of Czech music terminology, as documented in his posthumously published book "The Origins and General Principles of the Whole Art of Music". A vacant position of an auxiliary teacher brought him to Rozmital in 1788 (he was born in the nearby Prestice in Southern Bohemia), where he settled, married in 1790 and raised his family (13 children of whom 6 died early). His detailed diary documents Ryba's growing disillusionement with the environment in Rozmital, where his talents and efforts were not properly understood. He gradually withdrew from public life, becoming a loner who had lost belief in friendship and justice. On April 15, 1815 he ended his worsening isolation by taking his own life in the nearby forest Sterbina; the details of his tragic end remain a mystery until this day. Most of his prolific compositional output is lost. Only two string quartets and two flute quartets remain from all his chamber music works. The two string quartets (d-minor and a-minor) are both written in stylo serio, featuring monothematic and counterpoint work. The relatively short quartet d-minor being performed tonight consists of three movements: 1.ADAGIO, 2. MENUETTO - CANON, 3. SCHERZO - ALLEGRO.

Zdenek Fibich (1850 – 1900) occupies a special position among the romantic Czech composers. His works in musical melodrama (opera with spoken – rather than sung – words) are of exceptional importance in the music history. The bulk of Fibich's compositions encompass large works for the orchestra, including three symphonies, five symphonic poems and five concert overtures, as well as at least seven operas (the best known being "Sarka" and "The Bride of Messina"). His output in the genre of chamber music remains in the shadow of these larger orchestral and operatic works, compounded by the fact that the very self-critical composer doubted the quality of much of his chamber works and in 1897-98 de-

liberately destroyed about 120 pieces of primarily chamber music. Among the compositions that survived, the two string quartets are particularly important as both include movements conceived in the style of Czech folk dances. The first of the two, a quartet in A-major (without an opus number) in fact contains a movement in the form of a polka for the first time in Czech string quartet writing (Smetana's first string quartet, From My Life, was composed two years later). The String quartet in G- major, op. 8, is a work more somber in the tone and more compact in the structure than the rather flamboyant earlier work. However, also here the composer used the Czech folk dance motifs in at least two movements. The slow second movement is in the form of Fibich's (also Dvořák's) beloved "sousedska", while the finale is based on an imaginary folk dance scene introduced by a stylized bagpipe tones. The development in the rondo form is reminiscent of another Czech folk dance in triple time, the "rejdovak". The emphasis on Czech themes in these quartets is quite remarkable in view of the fact that Fibich's early inclination was to identify more with German rather than with Czech culture, as his mother was an ethnic German Vienese and much of his schooling - both general and musical - was obtained in schools in Vienna, Leipzig and Mannheim. Close to 200 of his early songs are in German and many of these, published under his preferred German version of his first name (Zdenko), won considerable praise from German critics but much less so from the Czechs. Although all of his operas are in the Czech language and he was the first Czech composer to write a nationalistic tone poem (Zaboj, Slavoj a Ludek) which served as the inspiration for Smetana's Ma Vlast, Fibich has never been held in the same regard as either Dvořák or Smetana by the Czechs. After living abroad for several years (including 2 unhappy years in Vilnius where he accepted a position of a choirmaster and where both his young wife and his two children died) he returned to Prague in 1874 to continue composing and occasional conducting activities in the "Prozatimni Theatre"(the temporary predecessor of the National Theatre) with a short stint as a dramaturge of the National Theatre. His last wife (a former student of his) wrote libretti for all his later operas.

Antonin Dvořák (1841 – 1904) undoubtedly the internationally best known Czech composer of all time, owes his fame to the extraordinary melodic richness of all his music. Although inspired by his deep love for the Czech countryside and its musical sounds, the music has a broad international appeal. His first international success as a composer came with the publication of the first row of Slavonic Dances, combining the folk song and dance approach (but not the tunes, as all the dances are musical creations of the composer) with the "popular" or "light classic" musical form. Many of his chamber works (as well as some of his symphonic and operatic output) contain the folk dance elements; some (e.g. the piano trio Dumky, op. 90) show such inspiration openly. In his last 4 years of life, Dvořák composed two operas (including the most famous Rusalka and his last work Armida) but concentrated mainly on writing chamber music. This genre contains fourteen string quartets, two piano quintets, three string quintets, a terzetto for two violins and viola, two piano quartets, a string sextet, four piano trios, five pieces specifically written for violin and piano and various other smaller compositions.

Among the quartets, the №12 (opus 96, "the American") is the most famous; however, the last two (№13, op. 106) and №14 (op. 105) are more important, illustrating Dvořák's advances in new artistic directions. The two quartets have an unusual genesis; the op. 14 was started during his last year as Music Director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York, but was put aside after the first 111 bars. Why this work was finished only after a new composition, the quartet №13 was written with a remarkable speed (from November 11 to December 9) is a matter of speculation; it may be that the death of his wife's sister Josephina (Dvořák's first and probably only true love in his life) had an influence, as the mood of the №14 is one of happiness and optimism. The quartet №13 in G-major, op 106 is a unique achievement in the field of absolute chamber music, in which Dvořák proved to himself that he regained his mature compositional mastery. Although the "point of departure" in this work is the cyclic sonata form, the music moves freely within its bounds with an extraordinary melodic inventiveness; the surprising harmonic and modulatory transformations of theme elements are truly unparalleled, particularly in the first movement. The second slow movement invokes the mood of the Dumky trio, with its feeling of peacefulness and spiritual comfort, while the scherzo of the third movement reflects on the composer's preceding creative period; the secondary theme is reminiscent of the scherzo from his New World symphony. The last movement, although in the rondo form, is constructed very loosely and its rich melodies graduate from a slow introduction through contemplative sections to a wild euphoria of musical achievement. The quartet was premiered by the Czech Quartet on October 9, 1896 in the "Slovansky Ostrov" hall on the river Moldau. Both quartets, the №13 and №14, became quickly known throughout the world and, until today, are a mainstay of repertoire of most of the top international quartets.

Notes by Professor P Jelen
President
Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences of Alberta

THE PANOCHA QUARTET

Jiri Panocha, violin
Pavel Zejfart, violin
Miroslav Sehnoutka, viola,
Jaroslav Kulhan, cello

The **Panocha Quartet** was formed in the gloomy days of the 1968 (after the collapse of the "Prague Spring" liberation movement) while its members were still students at the Prague Conservatory. The members of the original personnel set-up (Their first great successes came in 1975 in winning the International String Quartet Competition at the Prague Spring music festival and in 1976 with the award of the Bordeaux Gold Medal. The first recordings were quickly noted and received several prizes, including the Paris-based Grand Prix Academy Charles Cross in 1983 for a critically acclaimed Supraphon disc of the Martinu Fourth and Sixth quartets. The group has been busy traveling to festivals and concert halls throughout Europe, Israel, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and numerous other locales, inlcuding Edinburgh, Salzburg, Menton, Dubrovnik, Tel Aviv, Kuhmo, Mondsee and Edmonton (October 28, 2006). In the last two decades, the quartet made more than 15 tours of the United States and Canada. Not surprisingly, the group has focused much of its attention on Czech repertory, with Dvořák, Janácek, Smetana, Martinu, and others, often dominating their concert programs and recordings. However, the group's wide repertory includes also many works by Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Ravel, Bartók, Shostakovich, as well as by other lesser-known non-Czech composers. The ensemble has made numerous, highly successful recordings, mostly for the Czech label Supraphon. Their recent recording of all 14 Dvořák's string quartets (together with other works encompassing Dvořák's complete chamber output) is considered by many critics to be definitive. Today, many consider the Panocha Quartet to be the finest Czech quartet of the latter twentieth and early twenty first centuries.

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